HONEY BADGER PROJECT
Project File Document W-035
Townsend's big-eared bat Habitat Analysis
October 6, 2021

Habitat Relationships

Townsend's big-eared bats are primarily cave-dwelling species. Although they occur in a wide variety of habitats, distribution tends to be correlated with the availability of caves, especially old mine workings (Pierson et al. 1999). Caves and cave-like structures are a critical habitat for this species, both as hibernacula in the winter and as roosts for summer nursery colonies. They occasionally use bridges and open buildings for roosting and in some places have been known to use building attics as maternity sites (Pierson et al. 1999). In northern Idaho, Townsend's big-eared bats primarily roost in abandoned mines and may also use snags. Loss and/or disturbance of hibernacula and roosting habitat are the limiting factor for Townsend's big-eared bats. Notable threats include abandoned mine closures, recreational caving, and renewed mining at previous mine sites (Pierson et al. 1999).

Rationale for Determination of Effects

Townsend's big-eared bats have not been documented in the Honey Badger project area, although it is possible they might use the area for foraging. There are 19 adits in the project area and some may serve as potential roosting habitat if conditions are appropriate. A review of USFS records found that no adits in the project areas were surveyed for bats. Inventory records listed conditions for eight adits noting them as collapsed, insignificant or lacking necessary features (Wildlife Project File W-018); Therefore, they would be unable to provide bat habitat. Two adits in a proposed clearcut unit are listed as having bat gates. However, the shape of this unit is long and narrow, which will leave much of the potential foraging area around these adits intact. Additionally, 3 adits are located in proposed burn units, although it is unknown if those adits have bat gates. If bats are present in the proposed clearcut or burn units, they would be able to shift to alternate, nearby foraging areas as they would in the case of a natural fire or other forest disturbance.

This species is not known or suspected in the project's activity area nor are there any known maternity or hibernation roosts for bats on the district. Additionally, silvicultural prescriptions call for retainment of large trees and snag recruitment, which could provide roosting habitat if bats are present in the area. Since it is possible that Townsends big-eared bats may utilize the project area for foraging, the proposed action may affect individual bats (if present); However it is not expected to have a measurable difference at the population level of this species. The Forest Service is not aware of any past, present or reasonably foreseeable actions that may impact Townsend's big-eared bats in the project area.

Consequently, the Honey Badger proposed action in conjunction with past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions ***may impact Townsends big-eared bats or their habitat, but would not likely contribute to a trend towards Federal listing or cause a loss of viability to the population or species.***

REFERENCE CITED

Pierson, E.D., M.C. Wackenhut, J.S. Altenback, P. Bradley, P. Call, D.L. Genter, C.E. Harris, B.L. Keller, B. Lengus, L. Lewis, B. Luce, K.W. Navo, J.M. Perkins, S. Smith, and L. Welch. 1999.

Species conservation assessment and conservation strategy for the Townsend's big-eared bat. Idaho Conservation Effort, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Boise, ID. 67 p.

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